

**MINUTES OF THE FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Coughlin (Chair), Councillor Leaman (Vice Chair) and Councillors V Brown, Castle, Detre, Long, Malik and Powney (part).

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Colwill (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Social Care) and Councillor Powney (part).

Councillors D Brown (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation), Dunwell and Van Colle (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) were also present.

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Councillors Castle and Long declared personal interests with regard to items 5 (ii), (iii) and (iv) as members of the Brent Housing Partnership board, however they did not consider the interests prejudicial and remained present and took part in discussion on this item.

**2. Deputations**

None.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

None.

**5. Call-in of Executive Decisions from the meeting of the Executive on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

**(i) Customer Contact Transformation Programme – Progress Report**

Sandra Carson (Assistant Director, Customer Services) introduced this item and confirmed that 4 one stop shops would currently continue to operate and that longer term 2 major drop in centres would always be provided, whilst Shared Service customer contact points would be provided with enhanced signposting of services, local appointments and customer self service facilities at other designated libraries. A comprehensive impact assessment had concluded that no particular group would be significantly disadvantaged by the changes, although it may provide a less convenient situation for some residents. The Kingsbury Library and Customer Contact Point would provide customers with a bus service and ramps for disabled access. Members heard that there were 20 customers previously identified as potentially vulnerable that accessed the Kilburn Local Office prior to its closure and 8 at Kingsbury. Of the Kilburn customers, 9 had subsequently visited the Willesden Local

Office and 2 had visited Brent House, with the remainder having either not made any subsequent contact or had a change of circumstances affecting their need to contact the Council. Vulnerable customers that formerly accessed Kingsbury Local Office had predominantly visited Brent House or the Town Hall. Other service areas were aware of vulnerable people and there were systems in place which allowed for such people to be more closely monitored. Martin Cheeseman (Director, Housing and Community Care) added that steps were being taken to ensure the pilot arrangement at the Kingsbury Shared Service point would progress following earlier delays.

During discussion, Councillor Long enquired what meetings had taken place between the One Stop Shop and Libraries service areas with regard to the changes and whether there would be further contact points other than at libraries. She sought further details concerning the proposed bus service for the Kingsbury Shared Service and whether Transport for London (TfL) would be approached to provide additional bus services. She also enquired about the hours of opening for customer service points. Councillor Detre commented on the 83% of customers surveyed who were unaware of the appointments service in Kilburn and the modest take-up of this service. The Chair sought further reasons as to why the Kilburn One Stop Shop service had been withdrawn and enquired whether residents could deposit letters at any Council building. The Chair also enquired about arrangements in place to handle the increase of visitors who formerly used Kilburn to the Willesden Local Office.

In response to the issues raised, Sandra Carson advised Members that the proposed bus service to the Kingsbury Shared Service office would be operated in partnership with the Council's Transport Service on a 1 month trial basis where its use would be monitored and the route would start from Stag Lane. It was noted that Transportation Unit would be asked to approach TfL about providing additional bus services for Kingsbury Shared Service visitors. Sandra Carson advised that to date there had been little need for the interim Kilburn appointments service, possibly due to the fact that the Willesden Local Office drop in service continued and was conveniently located for Kilburn residents and also because many enquiries could be resolved over the telephone and One Stop Shop telephone staff were assessing the need for an appointment at all. However a customer contact point would be located at Kilburn Library. Sandra Carson confirmed that the proposed Customer Service Points would be available Monday to Friday, whilst the self-service facility provided extended hours as it was available throughout the library opening times. In addition, libraries would provide sign posting to the relevant service. Sandra Carson advised that there were no plans to extend customer contact points to locations outside libraries at this point, however there would be emphasis placed on improving face to face customer contact and improved sign posting. The Select Committee noted that letters could be accepted by any Council staff, however documents would need to be sent directly to the relevant service area as they would be subject to specific verification processes. Martin Cheeseman added that not submitting documents to the relevant service area could lead to delays in processing which could present significant problems for certain documents such as housing benefit claims.

Marianne Locke (Assistant Director, Arts and Learning, Environment and Culture) advised Members that there had been close collaboration between the One Stop Shop and the Library Service in devising the pilot schemes and discussion of longer term objectives and it was the intention to provide greater access to Council information and services.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

**(ii) Temporary Accommodation Update**

Perry Singh (Assistant Director – Housing Needs and Private Sector, Housing and Community Care) presented this item, stating that the reduction in available temporary accommodation was the main cause of the problems being experienced. He explained that the report outlined the different approaches that could be taken to address homelessness, whilst also describing the likely impact of the reduction in the Housing Benefit subsidy cap for leased temporary accommodation commencing in 2008/2009. Members heard that a Housing Advice Service review was underway.

Councillor Long enquired what measures were taking place to address the changing levels of temporary accommodation, particularly as they changed by the quarter and she sought comments on the Frays Housing Association scheme for the single homeless. She also enquired whether it was felt that the half day service at the Cricklewood Homeless Centre was sufficient. Councillor Detre supported the decisions made by the Executive and felt that the actions undertaken were all that was possible under the present circumstances.

In response, Martin Cheeseman advised that in the case of the redevelopment of South Kilburn, every opportunity was taken to secure temporary accommodation where possible. The temporary accommodation targets would present a considerable challenge in light of the other pressures the Council faced, such as the need to support redevelopment. Perry Singh stated that there would be a renewed focus on homeless prevention in view of the shortage of temporary accommodation provision. He confirmed that the Frays Housing Association scheme for the single homeless was operating to the required standards, whilst it was also felt that the Cricklewood Homeless Centre was also meeting the needs in the area, however this would continue to be kept under review as it was anticipated that demand for this service would increase as more people were made aware of its' existence.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

**(iii) Authority to Tender Contract for the Provision of Residential and Respite Care**

Christabel Shawcross (Assistant Director – Community Care, Housing and Community Care) introduced the report, stating that regular consultation had taken place with users and relatives since 2002 and he drew Members' attention to the accompanying briefing note describing the comments that had been received. Members heard that the first tender had involved 4 Melrose residents, who had received the appropriate training, being involved in the evaluation process. Whilst the overall response to the proposals was positive, the timescale involved was the cause of some anxiety following the non-progression of the 1<sup>st</sup> tender. Users and relatives continue to be involved with the service specification evaluation and a future report on the outcome of the tender to the Executive would include an analysis of users and preferences on the quality of the new provider.

During discussion, Councillor Castle sought further details of the concerns raised by users and relatives. Councillor Long asked if any more residents had moved into Melrose since the consultation had begun and whether long term staff would be retained under the new contract. Councillor Detre enquired whether there had been progress with regard to staff moving with their patients and whether staff had been informed that this would be expected of them. The Chair sought further clarification that all present staff would be employed under the new contract.

In reply, Christabel Shawcross stated that users' biggest concern focused on when they would be expected to move from their current accommodation, although their overall response was positive and they were particularly appreciative of the staff. She confirmed that no new residents had moved into Melrose since the consultation had started, although some had moved out and more were scheduled to follow. Members noted that staff would be expected to move with their existing patients and this would be communicated with staff and the unions. In addition, under the terms of the contract, all present staff would be retained apart from those who were due to retire.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

**(iv) Housing and Social Care Non HRA PFI Project – Funding of Advanced Works**

Peter Stachniewski (Deputy Director, Finance and Corporate Resources) introduced the report, stating that the details of the scheme had been explained in a report to the Executive in October 2007 and members of the Executive were therefore familiar with it. Approval of the planning application for the Ada Lewis House site was the only one outstanding from the phase 1 sites and the application was due to be presented to Planning Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Approval of advanced works prior to financial closure was desirable to mitigate against increasing costs arising from construction delays. These costs could be met if contractors could carry out advanced works; however the contractors were unwilling to proceed without securing

indemnities from the Council in case the PFI project did not proceed. It was these additional costs that were the main reason why a decision had been required at short notice. Financial closure, including agreement of all commercial issues, was scheduled for completion by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Peter Stachniewski stated that the earlier report to the Executive had outlined why the project represented value for money and provided certainty of investment in social housing units and care units for people with learning disabilities, whilst easing pressure on temporary accommodation supply. Peter Stachniewski advised that the Council would stand to lose up to £26.6m in PFI credits if the scheme did not proceed.

During Members' discussion, Councillor Detre asked if there were any concerns that there could be grounds for the Ada Lewis site's request for planning approval to be turned down and had there been consultation with the present tenants on the site. Councillor Long enquired whether officers were satisfied with the proposed design at the Ada Lewis site and would there be further costs if there any more delays to the scheme. The Chair asked if Quintain had been consulted with regard to the Ada Lewis site proposals and if the Council could consider further indemnities if there were more delays.

In reply, Martin Cheeseman stated that there had been much attention given to ensure that the Ada Lewis site's design was of high quality and collaboration between Housing and Community Care and the Planning Service had taken place to ensure this. Residents in the area had been consulted, as had Quintain and the current tenants of Ada Lewis House. It was felt that all concerns raised had been addressed as part of the planning application process and Martin Cheeseman felt the appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure the Council would not be liable to further costs or need to secure more indemnities if there were further delays.

Manjul Shah (Head of Affordable Housing Development, Housing and Community Care) added that informal consultation with residents in respect of the Ada Lewis site had not identified strong opposition to the plans, whilst the architects involved with the design had much experience in such schemes and had taken on board the advice from the Council. Manjul Shah also confirmed that there he was unaware of any objections being raised to the proposals from Quintain and that any objections received would be considered by the Planning Committee.

**RESOLVED:-**

that upon considering the report from the Director of Housing and Community Care, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

**(v) Library Strategy 2008 – 2012**

Marianne Locke drew Members' attention to the briefing note accompanying the main report to the meeting and stressed that all staff had been involved in the process of developing the strategy since work had begun in 2006. Their views had been included in the recommendations for the strategy and staff would continue to provide input with regard to implementation.

Councillor Van Colle (Lead Member for Environment, Planning and Culture) also emphasised that there had been much consultation in respect of this issue, stating that following discussion it was felt that it would be undesirable to undertake any library closures, although it was acknowledged that some libraries were in need of investment. Responding to a query from Councillor Long, Councillor Van Colle stated that various discussions had taken place with regards to the appropriate models.

During discussion, Councillor Long enquired what the sources of funding were, was funding available for work on the actual buildings and what was proposed for smaller libraries such as Barham Park. In noting the possibility of a new civic centre being built in the future, she asked if this would impact upon plans with regard to libraries in the northern part of the Borough. Councillor Long asked if the book stock was providing less choice and whether there were any plans to provide an alternative to the mobile library service that was to be withdrawn, adding that this service had been well used in the past. With regard to Harlesden Library running over budget, Councillor Long sought details of where funding would be obtained and would the Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES) facilities be transferred. She also sought further comments with regard to staff consultation and when was it due to finish and on staff arrangements with regard to longer opening hours. Councillor Castle commented that the strategy had produced imaginative solutions to the issues and challenges that were faced.

With the agreement of the Chair, Councillor Dunwell was invited to comment. Councillor Dunwell enquired whether any consideration had been given to allocating unit charges to specific uses with regard to Section 106 Agreements.

The Chair countered that flexible Section 106 Agreements were more helpful to the Council when allocating these funds. He enquired whether all major priorities identified in the strategy had been addressed. In noting that the withdrawal of the mobile library service would be partially re-provided by the home visits service, he enquired whether this would be undertaken within the existing resources. The Chair commented that the report appeared to suggest that Prudential borrowing may be used with regard to Harlesden Library's funding gap and he enquired whether the Council would be able to afford the loans.

In reply to the issues raised, Councillor Van Colle advised Members that Kingsbury Library would receive Capital Funding, Harlesden Library National Lottery Funding and Neasden Library funds from Section 106 Agreements. He warned that it would not be possible to invest in all libraries immediately, but changes and improvements would be made over time. He advised that Barham Park Library would continue to exist but with different opening hours, whilst an initial budget shortfall of approximately £300K had been recovered. The future of libraries in the north of the Borough could be reviewed at the appropriate time with regard to the new civic centre being built. Members noted that funding was available for building repairs, although not improvements at this stage. Councillor Van Colle stated that there were no

specific proposals for a proportion of Section 106 funds to be allocated to libraries, adding that the appropriate amount would be allocated as and when required. Members heard that the mobile library service could not continue due to the costs involved and its withdrawal would help meet emission targets.

Marianne Locke added the mobile library service had been delivering books to a number of community groups and there would be a replacement delivery scheme in place for such organisations. She confirmed that BACES facilities would continue to be available at Harlesden until the scheme finished in September 2009, whilst disabled access would also be provided. Further funding opportunities for Harlesden Library would be pursued and Marianne Locke added that Prudential borrowing may not be necessary.

Sue McKenzie (Head of Library Service, Environment and Culture) advised that the house visiting scheme was in need of being developed, although she felt that it would not require further funding to do so. Libraries were stocking top 10 best seller publications due to popular demand and Sue McKenzie commented that the book stock compared reasonably with other London boroughs. With regard to the consultation process, she explained that this had been extensive, and, since commencing in 2005, had involved consultation meetings, away days, bi-monthly forums and regular briefings and consultation would continue to play a part in strategy development. There had been detailed and ongoing consultation with staff in respect of opening hours, and feedback to date suggested that staff felt that longer opening hours could be accommodated. Members noted that staff could work in libraries across the Borough and consultation would be an ongoing process with no fixed deadline.

RESOLVED:-

that upon considering the report from the Director of Environment and Culture, the decisions made by the Executive be noted.

(vi) **Public Right of Way Improvement Plan**

Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) and Paul Williams (Highways Structures – Transportation Unit, Environment and Culture) attended the meeting to respond to Members' questions.

Councillor Long enquired whether this item had been presented to meetings of the Area Consultative Forums (ACFs), suggesting that the information could also be presented to residents of adjoining London boroughs who may use these public rights of way. She asked if a map of the borough's Public Rights of Way was publically available, what the status of alleyways were and noting that unnamed routes were maintained by the Council, enquired who owned them. Councillor Castle suggested that opportunities for local tourism could be boosted by linking routes through attractive parts of the borough. Councillor Malik suggested that presenting of this item to ACFs be put to their respective steering boards.

In reply, Councillor D Brown supported the idea of this item being presented at meetings of the ACFs. With regard to unnamed roads, he advised that ownership depended on whether these had been adopted by the Council.

Paul Williams added that there were often complexities involved with regard to ownership, however most unnamed footpaths were owned by the Council. He indicated that the Transportation Unit would be able to present this item at meetings of the ACFs, adding that the consultation was still ongoing. Members noted that alleyways were not classified as public rights of ways, whilst a map of the Borough's public rights of ways was available on the Council's website.

Members then agreed to the Chair's motion that the Executive be requested to instruct the Transportation Unit to liaise with ACFs and other relevant bodies in order to facilitate knowledge of the report and the consultative process.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that upon considering the report from the Director of Environment and Culture, the decisions made by the Executive be noted; and
- (ii) that the Executive be requested to instruct the Transportation Unit to liaise with Area Consultative Forums and other relevant bodies in order to facilitate knowledge of the report and the consultative process.

**6. The Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

RESOLVED:-

that the Executive List of Decisions for the meeting that took place on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008 be noted.

**7. Briefing notes/information updates requested by the Select Committee following consideration of Version 8 of the Forward Plan (2007/08)**

- (i) ***Library Strategy 2008 - 2012***

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

- (ii) ***Clock Cottage, Kenton Road, Harrow***

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

- (iii) ***Voluntary Organisations Update***

RESOLVED:-



- (i) that the briefing note be noted; and
- (ii) that a further briefing note be presented at the next meeting and that the lead officer attend to respond to Members' questions.

*(iv) Fees and Charges 2008/2009*

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

*(v) Waste Policy and Compulsory Recycling*

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

*(vi) Wembley Security Arrangements*

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

*(vii) Contract Award – CCTV Framework Agreement*

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

*(viii) Renewal of S31 Agreement with Central and Northwest London Health Trust (CNWL) for Brent Mental Health Services*

RESOLVED:-

that the briefing note be noted.

**8. The Forward Plan – Issue 9 (2007/08)**

Issue 9 of the Forward Plan (04.02.08 to 06.06.08) was before members of the Select Committee. Following consideration of Issue 9 of the Forward Plan, the Select Committee made the following requests:-

*(i) A Business Case for a new Civic Centre*

The Select Committee requested a briefing note on this item updating Members on the progress of the report. The request was suggested by Councillor Powney.

*The relevant Lead Member and Lead Officer for this item were not requested to attend the meeting.*

(ii) **Wembley Security Arrangements**

The Select Committee requested a briefing note on this item updating Members on the progress of the report. The request was suggested by the Chair.

*The relevant Lead Member and Lead Officer for this item were not requested to attend the meeting.*

9. **Items considered by the Executive that were not included in the Forward Plan**

There were none.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forward Plan Select Committee would be held on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.

D COUGHLIN  
Chair